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City Lowers Flags in Honor of Blair

Flags at City of Broken Arrow facilities were lowered to half staff Monday in honor of Lance Cpl. Thomas A. Blair, who became the community's first casualty in the war for Iraq. The City is also proclaiming this to be the "Thomas Alan Blair Memorial Week."

Mayor James C. Reynolds called for the action first thing Monday morning after it had become official that the 24-year-old Marine had been killed in a March 23 battle near An Nasiriyah. Blair had first been reported missing after the battle.

"I was told by a reporter calling me from Oklahoma City that this young man had, indeed, given his life for his country," said Reynolds Monday. "We at the City extend our deepest and most sincere condolences to his family and friends. From all I've seen and heard over the past few days, Thomas Blair was a credit to his family and his community, and he will be missed.

"There is no way of knowing how long this war may continue or how high the costs might be to the United States, but even the loss of this one young man from our city is a reminder of the price we pay for freedom."

Blair was a member of the Broken Arrow High School band and was praised by one of his former band directors as a young man of "character and leadership." After graduation from BAHS, Blair joined the Marine Corps in 1997. He served two years in Okinawa, Japan, and returned to the United States in October, 2002.

In January of this year he was deployed to Iraq with the 2nd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion, Air Control Group 28.

The city of Broken Arrow, then with a population of just over 10,000, was hard hit by the Vietnam War three decades ago, with seven young men from the community being killed in action. A memorial to those soldiers stands in Central Park. The BAHS football facility is named "Memorial Stadium" in honor of Broken Arrow soldiers from all wars.